

## HISTORY

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The culture we cherish today began long before the formation of the City of Liberty Lake. The Liberty Lake area was inhabited by Native Americans centuries before the first white settlers came to the area. In 1808, David Thompson, a fur trader, arrived in the area and was soon followed by missionaries. Native Americans still occupied Liberty Lake and surrounding areas as the white settlers began to arrive. According to the book entitled *Memories of Liberty Lake* by Mildred Brereton and Evelyn Foedish, an early fur trader named Ross Cox told tales of the Indians holding horse races on the plains. These horse races were a part of an annual feed on the shores of Liberty Lake that was hosted by Andrew Seltice, Chief of the Coeur d'Alene Indians. After the dinner, everyone enjoyed the horse races and athletic events where prizes were given out. Many families stayed overnight to hear Tecomtee, a Coeur d'Alene tribe member, sing Indian songs out over the Lake. These events were the early recreation for the Liberty Lake Community. In the early 1900's, during the late fall, winter, and early spring, Valley area farmers and ranchers would take advantage of a break from ranch work and get together on Saturday night at the Spokane Bridge near the Washington/ Idaho border for dancing to hill-billy music from around 8 p.m. till dawn. Another winter activity for the locals was Saturday night 500 card parties at one of the area ranches. The basic card game involved tables of four with partners sitting across from each other and working their way up toward a top table by collecting points, with the winners of the evening prize being the partners that reach the top table or 500 points. Also during periods of heavy snow, Saturday night hay rides were available with a team of four horses, complete with sleigh bells, that pulled a bob sled holding about 20 couples sitting on a mattress of straw. The ride toured from Liberty Lake to Newman Lake and around to the Spokane Bridge where they could enjoy the dance hall. Also by the early 1900's, several resorts were being developed around Liberty Lake, and the Lake was quickly becoming a vacation destination for the residents of Spokane and other surrounding areas. Pleasure boats that toured the lake were one of the many amenities that entertained visitors. The Spokane Inland Empire Railway began running electric trains in 1903 from Spokane to Liberty Lake that took around 45 minutes one way and a round trip to and from the Lake cost around 75 cents. The Spokane Inland Empire Railroad developed the Liberty Lake Park in 1909 which became very popular for picnics and other gatherings. The years 1910 to 1915 were the peak for the Liberty Lake Park and Liberty Lake became known as "Spokane's Inland Seashore". The natural beauty that included many different tree varieties and unusual flowers, mixed with the many attractions, made the park very popular. Visitors could rent boats from the Liberty Lake Boat Company for joy rides, enjoy the live band music and dancing at the Pavillion, stay at the hotel or one of the many resorts, rent swimming suits at the Hurtig Bath House, fish, picnic, savor the dining options, or just relax. As in the days of Tecomtee, the music from the Pavillion could be heard throughout the area. All Valley picnics and other business parties became a tradition at the Lake for many people each summer, and in the winter, people could enjoy ice skating on the Lake. The 1920's brought major changes to Liberty Lake. All Valley picnics began in 1922, and 1924 saw the biggest crowd ever for the annual 4th of July celebration. 14,000 people attended the festivities that year, with 9,000 of them arriving by train. With the onset of the automobile as the transportation mode of choice, the trains that had brought so many visitors to Liberty Lake quit running by 1926.

The beautifully maintained Liberty Lake Park was sold and re-named Silver City. It was converted to more of a carnival atmosphere with a ferris wheel, a swing ride, and an unusual carousel. Hand-carved wooden tigers, horses, frogs, cats, and dogs circled the elaborately crafted carousel built by artists and engineers of the Herschell-Spillman Company in 1913. The carousel remained at the Park until 1961 and today it is in the Henry Ford Museum at Dearborn, Michigan. The town was also beginning to develop around the Lake with more homes and supporting businesses and services being constructed. Farming continued with much of the land being covered in orchards and eventually grass fields. By 1951, there were six resorts operating on Liberty Lake and four public beaches. Liberty Lake was becoming known as a suburb of Spokane and development was limited to the Lake area, south of Sprague Avenue. The Liberty Lake Golf Course, the first of the three golf courses in Liberty Lake, was constructed on the northeast corner of Sprague Avenue and Molter Road in 1959. By the 1960's, many

of the original attractions around the Lake were gone. The dance pavilion at the old Liberty Lake Park was destroyed by fire in the summer of 1962. Spokane County bought and created the almost 3000 acre Spokane County Regional Park in 1966 which became the only public beach access, however, a public boat launch was also available on the north side of the Lake. Unfortunately the water quality of Liberty Lake had begun to decline, with algae covering much of the lake. By the 1970's, more resorts had closed and the Liberty Lake Park area was converted into a housing development. In 1991, the last resort on the Lake at Sandy Beach closed. However, the 1970's brought a surge in activity north of Sprague Avenue that would eventually be encompassed within the City of Liberty Lake. The large hill on the west side of the City, formerly known as Carlson Hill, became known as Holiday Hills, a ski and snowmobile recreation destination with a lodge and restaurant. Holiday Hills gave visitors more winter activity choices than just ice skating. An RV Park with an A-Frame office also offered camping in the summer at Holiday Hills. Over the years, the Holiday Hills site was used for equestrian activities, snowmobile and motocross racing, youth sports camps, and ice skating. Unfortunately, due to financial difficulties, Holiday Hills closed by the end of the decade. Recreation opportunities increased in 1973 with the development of the Valley View Golf Course east of Liberty Lake Rd. which was, at the time, the only mid length executive course in the northwest. Housing sales boomed in Liberty Lake in the mid 1990's with the creation of Meadowwood. Meadowwood Golf Course, the third golf course in Liberty Lake, Pavillion Park, and Liberty Lake Elementary School were also completed by the time the City of Liberty Lake officially incorporated on August 31, 2001. With three golf courses in the City limits of Liberty Lake, the Liberty Lake area is now known as a premier golf course community. Cultural traditions were formed during the time when Liberty Lake was known as "Spokane's Inland Seashore". There were Fourth of July Celebrations with fireworks over the lake, live music and dancing at the Pavillion, picnics, boating, and most of all, memories were being created. Although the original buildings no longer exist, the memories and traditions still live on. Families still visit Pavillion Park for picnics, birthdays, and other celebrations. Every year, Liberty Lake draws huge crowds for the annual Fourth of July celebration with a parade by the lake, and live music and dancing at Pavillion Park, which contains a replica of the original Pavillion for the next generation to enjoy. The musical traditions from years past still exist as the music echoes throughout the area. To conclude the festivities, fireworks are still launched over the lake. In 2002, the City purchased the Valley View Golf Course, now known as Trailhead at Liberty Lake, which is located at the center of the City on the corner of Country Vista and Liberty Lake Rd. The Liberty Lake community has also developed new annual traditions that have become a part of the Liberty Lake culture including an Easter Egg Hunt, Christmas Lighting Contest, Friends of Pavillion Park Holiday Ball, Community Yard Sale Weekend, and the Pavillion Park summer festival that includes outdoor movies, concerts, and other special events. Very few historical sites and structures remain within the City area. The old Holiday Hill winter recreation area that is now being replatted as a residential development still has the pole barn, track, and the original lodge fireplace. Unfortunately, the original lodge burned down in a fire in the early to mid 1980's.

Another residential plat that is currently under development in the northeast corner of the City, on the north side of Mission Ave., contains a homesite that dates back to the 1940's, with a well house that dates back to the early 1900's. This homesite has the oldest known existing structures within the City of Liberty Lake. The site is included as part of a future park area for the Rocky Hill PUD and should be preserved and protected in the future. The City's other pocket parks and the trail system were created as housing developments were constructed during the 1990's through 2003.

The history section above was derived from Liberty Lake's Cultural & Historical Heritage, prepared by the City of Liberty Lake Planning & Community Development Department (P&CD).